

Application No. 09/762,560
Response to Final Office Action

Customer No. 01933

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-31 (Canceled).

32. (Currently Amended) A photographic print vending apparatus comprising:

media accepting means for accepting a removable recording medium having photographic image information stored thereon;

5 image information reading means for reading the image information from the recording medium;

advertisement information storing means for storing advertisement information;

10 printing means for printing the image information onto a sheet;

a housing which houses the media accepting means, the image information reading means, the printing means and the advertisement information storing means; and

15 an outlet in the housing from which the printed sheet is output;

wherein the printing means prints the advertisement information onto the sheet with the image information, when an advertisement information printing mode is set;

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20 wherein the printing means comprises a plurality of printers, each of which is adapted to print the image information on the sheet; and

25 wherein the print vending apparatus further comprises image information distribution means for distributing the image information read by the image information reading means to at least one of the plurality of printers in accordance with a predetermined standard sequence, wherein if the image information comprises image information to be printed on a plurality of sheets, a plurality of the printers are assigned to print respective ones of the sheets in accordance with the predetermined sequence.

33. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 32, further comprising price option selecting means for selecting a price option for printing the image information;

wherein the advertisement mode is set based on the price option selected by a user.

34. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein the image information includes a plurality of sets of unit image information;

5 wherein the print vending apparatus further comprises unit image selecting means for selecting a set of unit image

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information desired by the user from the plurality of sets of the unit image information; and

wherein the printing means prints the selected set of the unit image information on the sheet together with the

10 advertisement image stored in the advertisement image storing means, when the advertisement information printing mode is set.

35. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 32, further comprising advertisement information receiving means for receiving advertisement information supplied from a remote site via a communication network;

5 wherein the advertisement information storing means stores the advertisement information received by the advertisement information receiving means;

36. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 32, further comprising:

status detection means for detecting status of the printing means; and

5 notification means for notifying a remote site of the status detected by the status detection means.

Claim 37 (Canceled).

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38. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 32, wherein the image information includes a plurality of
sets of unit image information;

wherein the print vending apparatus further comprises unit
5 image selecting means for selecting a plurality of sets of unit
image information desired by the user from the plurality of sets
of the unit image information; and

wherein the image information distribution means distributes
the selected unit image information sets to at least one of the
10 plural printers in accordance with a selecting order of the sets
of unit image information.

39. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 36, further comprising ejecting means for conveying a sheet
on which the image information is printed by any of the plurality
of printers to eject the sheet through the outlet of the case.

40. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 32, wherein the media accepting means comprises an
attachment for accepting the recording medium, wherein the
attachment is slanted such that an opening of the attachment is
directed downward.

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41. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein the plurality of printers comprise a plurality of sublimation thermal printers.

42. (Currently Amended) A photographic print vending apparatus comprising:

a case having an outlet;
media accepting means for accepting a removable recording medium having photographic print information stored thereon;
print information reading means for reading the print information from the recording medium;

a plurality of printers, each of which is adapted to print at least one image on at least one sheet in accordance with the print information read from the recording medium; and

print information distribution means for distributing the print information read from the recording medium to at least one of the plurality of printers in accordance with a predetermined standard sequence, wherein if the print information comprises print information to be printed on a plurality of sheets, a plurality of the printers are assigned to print respective ones of the sheets in accordance with the predetermined sequence;

wherein each of the plurality of printers comprises image data generating means for generating image data to be printed based on the print information distributed by the print

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information distribution means, and printing means for printing the generated image data onto a sheet; and

wherein the each sheet with the image data printed thereon is output through the outlet of the case.

43. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 42, further comprising status detection means for detecting a status of each of the plurality of printers;

wherein the print information distribution means distributes 5 the print information in accordance with detection results of the status detection means.

44. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 43, wherein the status detection means detects a remaining amount of an expendable supply in each of the printers; and

wherein the print information distribution means distributes 5 the print information to printers having a detected remaining amount of the expendable supply have enough remainders for printing.

45. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 43, wherein order information is applied to each of the plural printers;

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wherein the status detection means detects a remaining
5 amount of an expendable supply in each of the printers; and
wherein the print information distribution means distributes
the print information to the plurality of printers in accordance
with the order information and a detection result of the status
detection means in order of the remaining amount of the
10 expendable supply in each printer such that the print information
is distributed first to one of the printers which has the lowest
remaining amount the expendable supply.

46. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 43, wherein the status detection means detects a remaining
amount of an expendable supply in each of the printers, and the
print vending apparatus further comprises:

5 print quantity designation means for designating a print
quantity desired by a user;
remaining amount comparing means for comparing a required
amount of the expendable supply necessary for the designated
print quantity with the detected remaining amount of the
10 expendable supply in each of the printers; and
warning means for warning of a print capacity shortage when
the remaining amount comparing means determines that the
remaining amount of the expendable supply is less than the
required amount.

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47. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 46, wherein the print quantity designation means designates
print quantity by unit amount; and

5 designation canceling means for canceling the print quantity
designation based on an output result of the remaining amount
comparing means.

48. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 42, wherein the plural printers are grouped into a
plurality of groups of at least one of the printers; and
wherein the print information distribution means distributes
5 the print information to the at least one of the printers by
group.

49. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 42, wherein the plurality of printers print the image data
on different types of sheets;

5 wherein the print vending apparatus comprise sheet selecting
means for selecting one of the sheet types desired by a user; and
the print information distribution means distributes the
print information to the at least one of the printers based on
the sheet type selected by the sheet selecting means.

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50. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 42, further comprising:

status detection means for detecting a status of each of the
plurality of printers; and

5 notification means for notifying a remote site of the
detected status.

51. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 50, wherein each of the plurality of printers has
respective identification information; and

wherein the notification means notifies the remote site of
5 the detected status together with the identification information
of the corresponding printer.

52. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 42, further comprising ejecting means for conveying a sheet
on which the image data is printed by any of the plurality of
printers to eject the sheet through the outlet of the case.

53. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 42, wherein the plurality of printers comprise a plurality
of sublimation thermal printers.

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54. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to
claim 53, wherein each of the plurality of printers comprises
property storage means for storing property information relating
to a thermal print head property, and the print vending apparatus
5 comprises:

property reading means for reading the property information
stored in the property storage means of each printer; and

10 power supply means for controlling a supply of power to the
plurality of printers in accordance with the property information
of each printer read by the property reading means.

Claims 55 and 56 (Canceled).

57. (Currently Amended) A print vending apparatus
comprising:

a case having an outlet;

a processor; and

5 a plurality of printers connected to the processor, wherein
each of the printers comprises: (i) an image former which
generates image data to be printed based on print information,
and (ii) a printing unit for printing the generated image data on
a sheet;

10 wherein the print information is input to the processor, and
the processor distributes the received print information to at

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least one of the plurality of printers in accordance with a predetermined standard sequence, wherein if the print information comprises print information to be printed on a plurality of sheets, a plurality of the printers are assigned to print respective ones of the sheets in accordance with the predetermined sequence;

wherein the each printed sheet is outputted through outlet of the case.

58. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 57, wherein the processor detects status in each of the printers, and distributes the print information to the at least one of the plurality of printers in accordance with the detected status.

59. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 57, wherein the plurality of printers are grouped into a plurality of groups of at least one printer; and

wherein the processor distributes the print information to the at least one printer by group.

Claim 60 (Canceled).

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61. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a print vending machine for printing image information on a sheet with at least one of a plurality of printers, said method comprising:

5 distributing input print information to at least one of the plurality of printers in accordance with a predetermined standard sequence, wherein if the print information comprises print information to be printed on a plurality of sheets, a plurality of the printers are assigned to print respective ones of the sheets in accordance with the predetermined sequence;

10 generating image data to be printed in the at least one printer to which the print information is distributed;

printing the generated image data on the sheet with using a printing mechanism in the printer which generates the image data; and

15 outputting the sheets each sheet printed by the plurality of printers through an outlet of the print vending machine.

62. (Currently Amended) A photographic print vending apparatus comprising:

a case having an outlet;

5 accepting means for accepting a memory storing photographic print information;

photographic information reading means for reading the photographic information from the memory;

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10 a plurality of printers, each of which is adapted to print at least one image on at least one sheet in accordance with the photographic information read from the memory; and

15 print information distribution means for distributing the print information read from the memory to at least one of the plurality of printers in accordance with a predetermined standard sequence, wherein if the print information comprises print information to be printed on a plurality of sheets, a plurality of the printers are assigned to print respective ones of the sheets in accordance with the predetermined sequence;

20 wherein each of the plurality of printers comprises image data generating means for generating image data to be printed based on the photographic image information distributed by the print information distribution means, and printing means for printing generated image data onto a sheet; and

wherein the each sheet with the image data printed thereon is output through the outlet of the case.

63. (Currently Amended) A print vending apparatus comprising:

5 a case having an outlet;
an accepting unit which accepts a memory storing image information;

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an image information reader which reads the image information from the memory;

an information storage unit which stores second image information;

10 a processor connected to the image information reader and the information storage unit; and

a plurality of printers which print images on a sheet based on image data supplied from the processor;

15 wherein, when an information printing mode is set, the processor reads the second image information from the information storage unit, synthesizes the read second image information and the image information read by the image information reader, and distributes the synthesized information to the printers as image data in accordance with a predetermined standard sequence.

20 wherein if the image information comprises image information to be printed on a plurality of sheets, a plurality of the printers are assigned to print respective ones of the sheets in accordance with the predetermined sequence; and

25 wherein ~~a~~ each printed sheet is output through the outlet of the case.

64. (Currently Amended) A print vending apparatus comprising:

a case having an outlet;

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an accepting unit which accepts a memory storing image

5 information;

an image information reader which reads the image information from the memory;

an advertisement information storage unit which stores advertisement information;

10 a processor connected to the image information reader and the advertisement information storage unit; and

a plurality of printers which print images on a sheet based on image data supplied from the processor;

15 wherein the processor reads the advertisement information from the advertisement information storage unit, synthesizes the read advertisement information and the image information read by the image information reader, and distributes the synthesized information to the printers as image data in accordance with a predetermined standard sequence, wherein if the image information

20 comprises image information to be printed on a plurality of sheets, a plurality of the printers are assigned to print respective ones of the sheets in accordance with the predetermined sequence; and

25 wherein printed sheets are each printed sheet is output through the outlet of the case.

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